Vandalism

904 in 2000 · 980 in 2001 · Up 8%

Vandalism, or malicious destruction of property, includes tire-slashing, window smashing, spray-painting, and myriad other crimes in which someone's property is willfully and maliciously damaged or destroyed. It is the most commonly reported crime in Cambridge. Despite these high numbers, we suspect that vandalism is one of the most underreported crimes; residents and businesses frequently ignore "minor" incidents of vandalism and graffiti.

Vandalism usually falls into one of three categories:
1) juveniles looking for a thrill, including "taggers" or graffiti "artists"
2) revenge-motivated incidents, including neighbor and landlord/tenant disputes and traffic and parking disputes
3) botched attempts to break into a car (i.e., the window is smashed or the door lock is broken, but nothing is taken).

Vandalism by Neighborhood

Neighborhood	1999	2000	2001	Change 00-01
East Cambridge	131	91	96	+5%
MIT	12	23	11	-52%
Inman/Harrington	80	63	74	+17%
Area 4	100	129	122	-5%
Cambridgeport	79	97	113	+16%
Mid-Cambridge	77	90	98	+9%
Riverside	92	89	85	-4%
Agassiz	19	30	27	-10%
Peabody	71	57	96	+68%
West Cambridge	55	73	89	+22%
North Cambridge	108	105	111	+6%
Highlands	13	26	26	N.C.
Strawberry Hill	22	31	32	+3%
TOTAL	864	904	980	+8%

As 60% of all vandalism occurs to automobiles, this crime is likely to strike high-population residential areas and high-traffic commercial areas. Hence, the higher totals in Area 4, North Cambridge, East Cambridge, Mid-Cambridge, and Cambridgeport.

Several neighborhoods have seen increases in vandalism in 2001. Among the patterns of vandalism identified by the Crime Analysis Unit in 2001:

❑ **East Cambridge** experienced 56 incidents of vandalism to cars, whether it be broken windows, pinstriping, or denting cars. This is an increase of 47% from 2000's 38 incidents.

❑ **Inman/Harrington** experienced half of its' tire slashings during the last quarter of 2001.

❑ **Peabody** more than doubled in the number of vandalism in this neighborhood, jumping from 57 incidents in 2000 to 96 in 2001. The increase in numbers is partly due to the increase of graffiti, specifically on Richdale Ave., which accounted for 27% of Peabody's vandalism this year.

❑ **MIT** experienced more than a 50% drop in vandalism this year, partly due to no reports of graffiti. Over half of the incidents reported were of vandalism to cars.

❑ **Cambridgeport** had a spree of malicious destruction incidents to cars on Pleasant St., including one attempted car theft that was a nagging problem throughout 2001. The motivation surrounding the majority of these incidents varies, but mainly appears to be disagreements over parking spaces among neighbors or other relevant issues.

Categorical Breakdown of Vandalism

Category	2000	2001
Car window smashed	193	199
Dents/other damage to car	214	221
Tires slashed or punctured	104	111
Scratches, "pinstripes"	62	82
Total Damage to Autos	**573**	**613**
Misc. damage at residences	60	58
Window of residence smashed	58	43
Total Damage to Residences	**118**	**101**
Window of business smashed	60	53
Misc. damage to businesses	53	46
Total Damage to Businesses	**113**	**99**
Graffiti	**105**	**167**

As with other crimes, graffiti incidents probably reflect greater reporting than actual occurrences. Efforts of the city's Graffiti Hotline and Graffiti Task Force seem to be paying off with both increased awareness and increased removal of graffiti from public and private buildings.

The graffiti hotline, incidentally, can be reached at **349-INFO.** You can call to:

❑ Report existing graffiti
❑ Provide information to help apprehend "taggers"
❑ Get information about removal supplies and techniques for graffiti on your property
❑ Get information about community clean-up days.